

State to pay student fees for SAT preparation exams

Reed says state is removing obstacles to college success; encourages all students to participate

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Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Suellen Reed announced today that the State of Indiana will cover the cost of PSAT (Preliminary SAT) college preparation exams for all 10th and 11th grade students this year. Reed's announcement follows news last week that SAT scores remained relatively flat both nationally and in Indiana again this year.

"By removing preparatory exam fees from the equation, Indiana has eliminated another obstacle to preparing Hoosier students for college success," Reed said. "We've outlined the Core 40 and Academic Honors courses students need to take. Now it's up to our students to take full advantage of these opportunities."

Preparation makes the difference

Fewer than half (47 percent) of Indiana sophomores and juniors took the PSAT last year. The PSAT helps students gauge their readiness for higher education, provides feedback on what students need to work on before taking the SAT and qualifies them for National Merit Scholarship programs. With the state covering the cost of the PSAT, local schools can now encourage all students to take the PSAT and gain the advantages that experience provides.

Taking the PSAT can significantly improve a student's score on the SAT. Indiana students who took both the PSAT and the SAT scored 250 points higher on average than those students who did not in 2008. Students taking rigorous Core 40 courses scored about 100 points higher on the SAT than their peers in non-core classes.

In addition to higher SAT scores, ensuring all high school students take the PSAT offers educators and families an earlier and better gauge of their students' preparedness for college and allows schools to use PSAT results to identify students who would be best served by taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses that allow students to earn college credit in high school.

The bigger picture

Even after absorbing student PSAT fees, total statewide testing costs will be lower during the 2008 and 2009 fiscal years compared to previous years. The standard PSAT cost is \$13 per student. Under the new agreement negotiated by the state, the PSAT cost for each Indiana student will be reduced to \$10.40. The state's total expense for the program is estimated to be no more \$1.8 million, which will be paid for by applying savings achieved through related changes to the Indiana's assessment system.

The state's effort to expand college preparation opportunities for Hoosier students through increased PSAT access is part of a broader effort to develop a comprehensive assessment system for Indiana. In addition the latest announcement, that plan includes: offering new computer-based diagnostic tools to local schools on a voluntary basis for grades K-8, moving ISTEP+ testing to the spring (grades 3-8) and replacing the current ISTEP+ Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) with end-of-course exams in Algebra I and English 10.

More about the PSAT

The PSAT is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT by measuring critical reading, math problem-solving and writing skills. The PSAT allows students to:

- Receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses to help students focus on those areas that could most benefit from additional study or practice.
- Prepare for the SAT by becoming familiar with the kinds of questions found on the SAT.
- Compare their performance on an admissions test with that of others applying to college.
- Enter the competition for National Merit Scholarships and its programs.
- Receive information from colleges (depending on their preference).

PSAT testing will take place at locations across the state on October 15, 2008. The registration deadline for ordering student testing materials is September 24, 2008. Additional details related to the PSAT are available online at www.collegeboard.com/psat.